

The Liberty Wing and

During the last seven years, the Air Force's vision of readiness was known as "Global Reach - Global Power." But now it's time for a new vision, according to Air Force leaders.

"We have seen for some time that we were approaching the edge of the map that Global Reach-Global Power sketched out for us," said Secretary of the Air Force Sheila Widnall. "If we are to build the force this nation needs for the first quarter of the next century, if we are to conduct our role as stewards of this nation's air and space power . . . then we must extend that map."



Photo by SrA. Scott Asche

SSgt. David Goletz, crew chief, helps Maj. Paul Beason, 492nd Fighter Squadron pilot, prepare for another sortie.

cies to national service: air and space superiority, information superiority, global attack, precision engagement, rapid global mobility, and agile combat support.

"These are the things the Air Force should focus on," said Fogleman. He also pointed out that other services can share in these competencies, but that the Air Force has a special responsibility to make sure it's engaged in them.

Air and space superiority

The Liberty Wing has provided air superiority in numerous missions from D-Day to Operation Northern Watch over northern Iraq. Today, the 493rd Fighter Squadron's Grim Reapers fly the F-15C air superiority fighter in support of U.S. and NATO interests.

"Our job in the 493rd is to be ready to respond on short notice to conduct combat operations here at Lakenheath, as well as anywhere in this theater and throughout the world, in support of U.S. national interests and the interests of our NATO allies," said Lt. Col. William MacLure, 493rd FS opera-

tions officer. "Our squadron is fully trained and more than ready to meet this task."

Air superiority is critical to the successful accomplishment of any contingency operation, added the colonel.

"Air operations to gain and then maintain air superiority are always the joint forces commander's first priority," he said. "When air superiority has been achieved, the JFC then has the freedom to conduct offensive air and ground operations unhindered by a threat from the air."

Information superiority

Many have called this the information age. Television, radio, newspapers and the Internet deluge people daily with enormous amounts of information. But information can be more than just news.

From the Air Force perspective, it's a variety of vital information that can impact military operations, from targeting data to personnel information.

Success on the battlefield demands the Air Force use and protect its own information as well as disrupt or eliminate the enemy's use of their information, said Air Force leaders.

The 48th Fighter Wing contributed to Air Force information superiority during Operation Deliberate Force when F-15E aircrews from the wing were selected to test the Rapid Targeting System over Bosnia-Herzegovina. This system provides airborne aircrew with near real-time intelligence information and potential targets.

"This information reduces response time, reduces collateral damage with real time target data, and adds flexibility for the ground commander," said Lt. Col. Michael Spencer, 494th FS operations officer.

It's a force multiplier that allows the joint warfighting commander to reallocate air assets both airborne and on the ground, he added. The RTS also provides real time battle damage assessment which affects what missions aircrews may have to fly that day or the next.

Global attack

The 48th Fighter Wing contributes to the global attack competency because of its forward deployed location.

"Fighter aircraft from Lakenheath can launch anywhere in theater within hours to defend U.S. or NATO interests," said Col. Doug Richardson, 48th Fighter Wing commander. "This makes the wing an important asset to any air expeditionary

global engagement

force or joint force commander.”

Such an ability is key to global attack.

“The primary aspect of global attack is the ability of the Air Force to find, fix, and attack targets anywhere on the globe using the synergy generated by air and space assets to operate at the strategic level of war,” said Fogleman.

Precision engagement

Fighter aircraft from the 492nd and 494th Fighter Squadrons specialize in precision engagement.

During Operation Deliberate Force, one-hundred percent of all 48th Fighter

Wing taskings called for precision guided munitions, according to Spencer.

“Nearly all of these targets were hardened facilities, all destroyed with no collateral damage,” he explained.

The Air Force defines precision engagement as the ability to reliably and selectively apply the full range of precision capabilities to achieve the desired effect with minimal risk and collateral damage.

“Because it saves lives of friends, foes, and civilians, the Air Force core competency of precision engagement will remain a top priority in the 21st century,” said Widnall.

Spencer agrees. He expects precision engagement to be the standard, in large part because of the successes of airpower in recent major military operations.

“Our political leaders and the civilian public saw what precision engagement did for us in Desert Storm and Bosnia,” he said. “This is the benchmark for future conflicts. Precision munitions were used exclusively in Bosnia to avoid any potential for collateral damage to avoid the international political ramifications that could result from such damage.”

Rapid global mobility

Because of its location, the 48th Fighter Wing is often called upon to support missions throughout Europe, Africa and the Middle East. A key component in the wing’s ability to fly missions is its partnership with RAF Mildenhall’s 100th Air Refueling Wing.

Home to nine permanently assigned KC-135R refuelers and augmented by the European Tanker Task Force, the 6,000 men and women of the 100th ARW support rapid

global mobility by providing all air refueling support for the U.S. Air Forces in Europe’s theater of operations. In 1995, they flew more than 70 percent of its missions in support of United Nations taskings, refueling various U.S. and NATO aircraft.

This kind of support is the cornerstone of rapid global mobility, according to Air Force leaders.

“Our airlifters and tankers are important today and they’ll continue to be so in the future,” said Fogleman. “They give the national command authorities the ability to reach out and influence events around the world.”

Agile combat support

The Liberty Wing provides agile combat support every time it sends troops or logistics to various contingencies around the world. For example, more than XXXX support troops and aircrew deployed in support of Operation Joint Endeavor in 1996.

“Air and space forces provide worldwide situation awareness,” said Fogleman. “They are generally the first forces called forward in a crisis. Normally, satellites provide warning of an emerging crisis to national authorities. In turn, the national leadership tasks a theater commander to respond.

“That commander wants to establish information superiority over his battlespace, so he calls for reconnaissance or surveillance platforms such as AWACS, Rivet Joint, Reef Point P-3s, and the U-2,” explained the general. “These are usually the first forces to arrive, followed by our fighter squadrons. Because we must be the first in, our forces must be light, agile and far-ranging. This not only includes lean logistics, but also force protection and ability to set up rapidly deployable light forces.”

The entire RAF Lakenheath, RAF Feltwell and RAF Mildenhall community plays a critical role in supporting Global Engagement, according to Maj. Gen. Tad Oelstrom, 3rd Air Force commander.

“Reviewing the mix of aircraft, personnel and equipment assigned to our command, you can easily see we have an impressive array of capabilities at our disposal,” he said.

These capabilities can support a full range of military involvement, from directing a major air campaign to providing humanitarian support, noncombatant evacuation and peacetime assistance, he added.

Ultimately, support for Global Engagement comes down to the people who make the mission happen, said the 48th Fighter Wing commander.

“The chief is absolutely correct when he says that air and space power are produced by our airmen,” said Richardson. “Each member of the Liberty Wing is a part of this vision. Whether you’re a contractor, cop, medic, accountant or aircrew member, you can be the next ‘weapon of choice’ when it comes to global engagement . . . so be ready.”



Photo by SSgt. Scott Davis

SSgt. James Mcle, tactical aircraft maintenance instructor with 372nd Training Squadron Detachment 16, shows the proper startup procedure in a simulator to SSgt. Jeff Currence, 492nd Fighter Squadron.